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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001479

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: RAZALI: CAUGHT BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD CASE

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez. Reason: 1.5 (d).

1. (C) Summary: Razali told diplomats at an early evening briefing today that the dialog between the NLD and the SPDC appeared to be stalled as much by a personality conflict between Aung San Suu Kyi and Than Shwe as anything else. Each one is imperious in his own way and neither is ready to compromise. The visit also made clear that Than Shwe was the decision-maker in Burma; any commitments made by Khin Nyunt had to be confirmed by Than Shwe. That said, Khin Nyunt had broached the idea of reconvening a reformulated National Convention -- a suggestion that is apparently acceptable, at least in principle, to both ASSK and the ethnic parties. Khin Nyunt also suggested that 200 to 300 additional political prisoners and security detainees could be released by the close of the year, though, again, as with all other matters, Than Shwe failed to confirm the commitment. Finally, Razali confirmed that he would continue as Special Envoy, with his next visit possibly occurring early next year. End Summary.

2. (C) UN Special Envoy Razali told diplomats November 15 that he would continue in his role as facilitator for the talks between the NLD and the GOB. He was, he said, beginning to get a feel for "the complexities of the situation". He had met with Secretary 1 Khin Nyunt, Aung San Suu Kyi representatives of the ethnic communities and Senior General Than Shwe and understood now that there were at least "two levels of decision-making" within the SPDC. Any commitments by Khin Nyunt had to be confirmed by Senior General Than Shwe. Furthermore, there was probably blame on both sides for the lack of progress on the dialogue.

3. (C) Razali described his meeting with Khin Nyunt as "very good, very candid and very relaxed." Razali took Khin Nyunt up on his failure to deliver on his August promise to Razali regarding the start of real dialog. Khin Nyunt said he was doing his best, trying to act "as a catalyst between the NLD and the SPDC." However, every aspect of exchanges with the NLD were examined every week in detail by the SPDC. As a result, it was difficult to move forward on anything. Khin Nyunt also told Razali that there was "a channel of discussion" between the NLD and the SPDC. The Minister of Education (a cousin of Than Shwe, he is also Secretary General of the USDA), the Deputy Minister of Information and Brigadier General Than Thun had met four times with Aung San Suu Kyi in "round table discussions" which Khin Nyunt described as "positive and constructive." in the same breath, however, he also complained that ASSK had to take the discussions more seriously. Seemingly, she was disdainful of both the participants and the topics on the table. In fact, Razali said, when he met with her, she was scornful of the meetings with the Minister of Education et al.

4. (C) Khin Nyunt also told Razali that he is prepared to reconvene the National Convention with adjustments in its rules and procedures, though, when pushed on what adjustments would be made, was vague. Similarly, Khin Nyunt also suggested that as many as 300 additional political prisoners and security detainees could be released before the close of the year. Aung San Suu Kyi, Razali said, agreed that the NLD would rejoin a properly reformulated National Convention. According to Razali, representatives of ethnic parties also accepted the idea of a reconvened Convention.

5. (C) Than Shwe gave Razali only fifteen minutes, but that was enough to convince Razali that Khin Nyunt and Than Shwe were not always on the same page. Than Shwe for instance did not commit to reconvening the National Convention and, according to Razali, even now he cannot say whether or not the GOB will go that route. Similarly, when the topic turned to consultations with the NLD regarding humanitarian assistance for Burma -- an idea which Khin Nyunt had accepted -- Than Shwe, while not saying a word, gave every indication of acute discomfort. He also failed to confirm Khin Nyunt's commitment on the release of political prisoners. The most he would say is that he would "do the best for the country." Than Shwe also vetoed Razali's final meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi, which had been scheduled for Taungyi in Shan State, where she is traveling on NLD business. According to Than Shwe, ASSK was on a "political tour" and any meeting by Razali with her while she was on that tour would show undue

favoritism for the NLD.

16. (C) In general, Razali concluded that the relationship between ASSK and Than Shwe was extremely difficult. There was a great deal of suspicion of ASSK's activities and apparently Than Shwe felt that somehow, somewhere ASSK had offended him on two occasions, though nobody would say exactly what the offense was. As for ASSK, she simply had a "hard personality" that Than Shwe (and others) had difficulty dealing with.

17. (C) On other topics, Razali said that he had been warned not to raise Burma's economic situation with Than Shwe. Presumably, the senior general had gotten an earful from other ASEAN members during the ASEAN summit in Phnom Penh. He also suggested that he might be back in January or February for what will be his tenth visit.
Martinez